

West End Walkers 65+: Using programme theory to enhance outcome assessment in a randomised controlled trial

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Background: Walking has great potential to engage people in physical activity (PA), and could address health problems associated with sedentary living. Previous research showed increasing walking behaviour in inactive adults aged 18-65 years is feasible ¹. However, a systematic review showed that evidence on how to encourage older adults to increase walking is lacking ². This study aims to test a pedometer-based walking programme in combination with a PA consultation with adults aged 65 years+ in a primary care setting and to design a study protocol that enables shared learning outcomes.

Methods: Over 12 months, West End Walkers 65+ will recruit 46 participants, aged 65 years+. Participants will be allocated to: Group 1 PA consultation, individualised walking programme and pedometer; or Group 2 a waiting list control group. Step counts, activity patterns and psychological measures will be assessed pre and post intervention. Focus groups and interviews will be completed with participants and stakeholders post intervention.

Programme Theory: Feasibility of the intervention will be assessed using a programme theory. A programme's theory conceptualises what must be done to bring about desired outcomes. This allows comparison between project planning and design and programme processes³. A triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research measures will inform this assessment. Feasibility will be assessed using goals designed to promote shared and transferrable learning outcomes.

References

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